



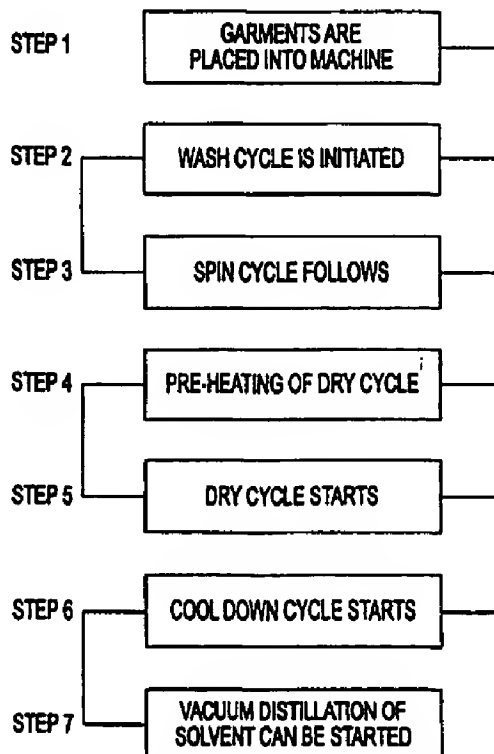
## INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification <sup>7</sup> : <b>D06L 1/02</b>		(11) International Publication Number: <b>WO 00/04221</b>
<b>A1</b>		(43) International Publication Date: 27 January 2000 (27.01.00)
(21) International Application Number: <b>PCT/US99/15920</b> (22) International Filing Date: <b>14 July 1999 (14.07.99)</b> (30) Priority Data: 09/115,352      14 July 1998 (14.07.98) <b>US</b> (71) Applicant: <b>GREENEARTH CLEANING, LLC [US/US]; 3724 West 119th Terrace, Leawood, KS 66209 (US).</b> (72) Inventors: <b>BERNDT, Wolf-Dieter, R.; 895 Apollo Way, P.O. Box 4413, Incline Village, NV 89450 (US). GRIFFIS, John, McLeod; Apartment 5, 2360 Union Street, San Francisco, CA 94123 (US).</b> (74) Agent: <b>STEPHENS, L., Keith; Hickman Stephens &amp; Coleman, LLP, P.O. Box 52037, Palo Alto, CA 94303-0746 (US).</b>		(81) Designated States: <b>AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).</b>  <b>Published</b> <i>With international search report.</i>

(54) Title: **DRY CLEANING METHOD AND SOLVENT**

## (57) Abstract

A dry cleaning system and method comprises specially designed or modified machinery used in conjunction with a cyclic siloxane solvent. In a preferred embodiment, the method comprises the steps of loading articles into a cleaning basket; agitating the articles and the siloxane composition in which they are immersed; removing most of the siloxane composition; centrifuging the articles; subjecting the articles to a partial vacuum pressure and elevated temperature; and removing the articles from the basket after cooling the articles and returning the pressure to ambient.



**FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY**

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	ES	Spain	LS	Lesotho	SI	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	FI	Finland	LT	Lithuania	SK	Slovakia
AT	Austria	FR	France	LU	Luxembourg	SN	Senegal
AU	Australia	GA	Gabon	LV	Latvia	SZ	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	GB	United Kingdom	MC	Monaco	TD	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GE	Georgia	MD	Republic of Moldova	TG	Togo
BB	Barbados	GH	Ghana	MG	Madagascar	TJ	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	GN	Guinea	MK	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	TM	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	GR	Greece	ML	Mali	TR	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary	MN	Mongolia	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	IE	Ireland	MR	Mauritania	UA	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	IL	Israel	MW	Malawi	UG	Uganda
BY	Belarus	IS	Iceland	MX	Mexico	US	United States of America
CA	Canada	IT	Italy	NE	Niger	UZ	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	JP	Japan	NL	Netherlands	VN	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	KE	Kenya	NO	Norway	YU	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	KG	Kyrgyzstan	NZ	New Zealand	ZW	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	PL	Poland		
CM	Cameroon	KR	Republic of Korea	PT	Portugal		
CN	China	KZ	Kazakhstan	RO	Romania		
CU	Cuba	LC	Saint Lucia	RU	Russian Federation		
CZ	Czech Republic	LI	Liechtenstein	SD	Sudan		
DE	Germany	LK	Sri Lanka	SE	Sweden		
DK	Denmark	LR	Liberia	SG	Singapore		
EE	Estonia						

## DRY CLEANING METHOD AND SOLVENT

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

### FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention is in the general field of dry cleaning of clothing, textiles, fabrics and the like. The invention is more particularly directed to a method and apparatus for dry cleaning fabrics using a solvent not heretofore used in dry cleaning machines. The invention is more particularly directed to a dry cleaning apparatus wherein a silicon-based solvent is utilized which has a desirable flash point rating (over 140 degrees Fahrenheit) and fabric-safe qualities (non-dye pulling and non-shrinkage) together with superior solvency for fatty acids, grease and oils in a specially designed dry cleaning process.

### PRIOR ART

Dry cleaning is a major industry throughout the world. In the United States alone, there are more than forty thousand dry cleaners (many of these have multiple locations).

The dry cleaning industry is an essential industry in the present economy. Many articles of clothing (and other items) must be dry cleaned in order to remain clean (the removal of body fats and oils), and presentable (do not shrink or discolor clothing).

The most widely used dry cleaning solvent until now has been Perc. There are numerous disadvantages to Perc including its toxicity and odor. The machinery widely used, until now, has been manufactured specifically for use with Perc. This has been another limiting factor in the industry.

Another problem in this field is that different fabrics require different handling in the presently used systems in order to prevent damage to the fabrics during the dry cleaning process.

The prior art in dry cleaning includes the use of various solvents with appropriate machinery to accomplish the cleaning. In the most recent past, the solvent most widely used has been perchloroethylene (herein generally referred to as "Perc"). Perc has the advantage of being an excellent cleaning solvent, but the disadvantage of being a major health and environmental hazard (i.e., it has been linked to numerous forms of cancer and it is very destructive to ground water and aquatic life). In some areas Perc is no longer allowed to be used. Additionally, in the past other solvents such as petroleum-based solvents and glycol ethers and esters have been tried and used. These various solvents have been used with mixed cleaning results and problematic fabric/textile compatibility as compared to the results obtained with Perc.

The present invention is distinct from the prior art that it relies upon a non-Perc solvent with superior characteristics as described below, and used in a method involving dry cleaning machinery which has been specially designed for the solvent.

The only use of a cyclic siloxane composition for cleaning purposes is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 4,685,930 to Kasprzak. However, the disclosure therein is for spot cleaning applications only. There is no disclosure of immersing articles into the cyclic siloxane nor is there any suggestion of using the cyclic siloxane in a dry cleaning machine. Moreover, there is no suggestion of subjecting such articles immersed in cyclic siloxane to agitation, spinning, partial vacuum and heating in a continuous process to dry clean articles in a bulk process for removing fats, oils, grease and other soils from a large number of entire clothing articles.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention comprises a novel dry cleaning system and method, in which specially designed or modified machinery is used in conjunction with a specific solvent which is derived from an organic/inorganic hybrid (organo silicone). In this class of organo silicones is a group known as cyclic siloxanes. The cyclic siloxanes present the basis for material composition of the solvent chemistry which allows this dry cleaning system to be highly effective. The cyclic-siloxane-based solvent allows the system to result in an environmentally friendly process which is, also, more effective in cleaning fabrics and the like than any known prior system. The siloxane composition is employed in a dry cleaning machine to carry out the method of the invention. In a preferred embodiment, the method comprises the steps of loading articles into a cleaning basket; agitating the articles and the siloxane composition in which they are immersed; removing most of the siloxane composition; centrifuging the articles; subjecting the articles to a partial vacuum pressure and elevated temperature; and removing the articles from the basket after cooling the articles and returning the pressure to ambient.

### OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

It is therefore a principal object of this invention to provide a method of dry cleaning using environmentally friendly solvents and techniques.

5

It is another object of this invention to provide a dry cleaning method wherein the articles being cleaned are not harmed by the solvent.

10

It is another object of this invention to provide a dry cleaning solvent which does not deposit and or build up in clothing and is also hypoallergenic.

15

Another object of this invention is to provide a dry cleaning solvent which has unique flammability characteristics, wherein the flashpoint and fire point are separated by at least 10 degrees Fahrenheit whereby the solvent is self extinguishing between the flashpoint and the firepoint.

20

Yet another object of this invention is to provide a dry cleaning solvent which can be heated above room temperature (over 70 degrees Fahrenheit) without causing harm to fabrics which further improves and speeds up the cleaning process.

25

Still another object of this invention is to provide a dry cleaning solvent which has a surface tension less than 18 dynes/square centimeter to better penetrate fabric fibers to remove debris to make it easier to remove the solvent from the fabric.

The foregoing and other objects and advantages of this invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art based upon the following description of a preferred embodiment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

The aforementioned objects and advantages of the present invention, as well as additional objects and advantages thereof, will be more fully understood hereinafter as a result of a detailed description of a preferred embodiment when taken in conjunction with the following drawing in which:

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of the steps of the process showing one embodiment of the present invention.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The present method of dry cleaning is unique, particularly with the use of a commonly known fluid class of cyclic siloxanes used for cosmetics and topical pharmaceuticals. These cyclic siloxanes are more particularly known as **octamethyl-cyclotetrasiloxane (tetramer)** and **decamethyl-cyclopentasiloxane (pentamer)**. These fluids have never been disclosed as a dry cleaning solvent alternative for use in a dry cleaning machine. Combinations of the above tetramer and pentamer are by themselves not completely suitable for dry cleaning in their pure form. They are modified in the dry cleaning method of the preferred embodiment. The modification is in the form of adding soil suspending additives to prevent redeposition of dirt during the wash and rinse cycle, detergents for water-base stains, and disinfectants for the disinfection of bacteria and other forms of microorganisms which are present in all clothing.

The following steps more specifically describe the dry cleaning method of the preferred embodiment:

At step 1 garments or other items to be dry cleaned are placed in a vertical combination washer dryer with a horizontally rotating agitating cleaning basket (known to those skilled in the art). The barrel of the basket will have numerous holes or perforations, preferably each hole will be 1/8 to 3/8 inches in diameter.

At step 2 the wash cycle is initiated with the solvent consisting of a combination of the tetramer and pentamer cyclic siloxane. The preferred combination is 80% tetramer and 20% pentamer by weight. The additives which modify the above mixture may be added separately just before the washing cycle and need not be part of the solvent composition. The use of these additives, namely detergents and suspending agents, allows the solvent to perform a total garment cleaning process. The solvent is pumped from a holding tank into the cleaning basket. The items being cleaned are agitated, such that the mechanical rubbing of the clothes and the infiltrating solvent dissolves and loosens dirt, debris and body fats from the fabric fibers, said agitation lasting from 3 to 10 minutes or more. The solvent is then pumped out of the basket back into the holding tank through a charcoal and/or clay filter system in order to remove the impurities which may have entered the solvent during the washing cycle.



At step 3 the items having been cleaned are spin dried, preferably for about three to five minutes somewhere between 350 to 1000 rpm (revolutions per minute); preferably between 450 to 750 rpm. This operation leaves no more than 3% solvent residue in the items being cleaned. The higher the rpm, the faster the solvent is removed by the centrifugal force of the spinning basket. The very low surface tension of the solvent maximizes the efficacy of solvent removal via this centrifugal spinning process.

At step 4 the garments are tumbled in the basket and heated to a temperature between 120 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit. This is accomplished by passing pressurized steam through a coil which heats up the air inside the basket through the use of a circulating fan. While this is happening, a partial vacuum is created inside the machine at negative pressure between 500 and 600 millimeters of mercury (where atmospheric pressure is 760 mm.). During this heating cycle, the solvent is vaporized and carried by circulating air to a refrigerated condensing coil which condenses the solvent from a vapor to a liquid collected out of the main air stream. In time, typically 15 to 20 minutes, all the solvent is removed from the garments.

At step 5 the heating cycle is stopped and the cooling cycle begins. The temperature is reduced from 140 degrees Fahrenheit to below 100 degrees Fahrenheit. This is accomplished by eliminating the vacuum and circulating the air through the refrigerated coils until the process is complete.

The cleaning process is complete when the garments are removed from the machine at near body temperature or below to reduce secondary wrinkling. Removing the garments at a high temperature would cause wrinkling.

Having thus disclosed a preferred embodiment of the method and apparatus of the present invention, it being understood that the description is only exemplary and not necessarily limiting of the scope of the invention, what is claimed is:

### CLAIMS

1. The method of dry cleaning articles comprising the steps of: immersing said articles to be dry cleaned in a dry cleaning fluid containing cyclic siloxane composition; agitating the articles in said composition; and removing said composition from said articles by centrifugal action and heat.

2. A dry cleaning method according to claim 1 wherein the articles being dry cleaned, after having been agitated, but before being centrifuged and heated, are subjected to a vacuum by reducing pressure to lower the flashpoint of the composition.

3. The method recited in claim 1 wherein said cyclic siloxane composition comprises the pentamer and tetramer cyclic siloxane as a solvent for use in the dry cleaning machine.

4. The method recited in claim 1 wherein said cyclic siloxane composition comprises detergent, disinfectant, suspending agents and brighteners.

5. The method of dry cleaning articles comprising: placing articles to be dry cleaned in the cleaning basket of a washer and dryer combination; introducing a cyclic siloxane composition into the cleaning basket; agitating the articles and said composition in the cleaning basket; centrifuging the articles within the cleaning basket to remove the cyclic siloxane composition from the articles; subjecting the articles within the cleaning basket to a partial vacuum; heating the articles within the cleaning basket and under the partial vacuum; cooling the articles; and removing the articles from the cleaning basket.

6. An apparatus for dry cleaning articles; the apparatus comprising:  
a dry cleaning machine having a basket for receiving said articles and a source of cyclic siloxane composition; a liquid pump for transferring said composition into said basket; a motor for agitating and spinning said basket; a vacuum pump for subjecting said articles to a partial pressure; and a heater for raising the temperature of said articles.

7. The apparatus recited in claim 6 wherein said composition comprises a mixture of octamethyl-cyclotetrasiloxane and decamethyl-cyclopentasiloxane.

8. The apparatus recited in claim 6 wherein said composition comprises a mixture of at least two forms of cyclic siloxane.

5 9. The apparatus recited in claim 7 wherein said composition further comprises a detergent.

10 10. The apparatus recited in claim 8 wherein said composition further comprises at least one additive taken from the group consisting of detergents, disinfectants, suspending agents and brighteners.

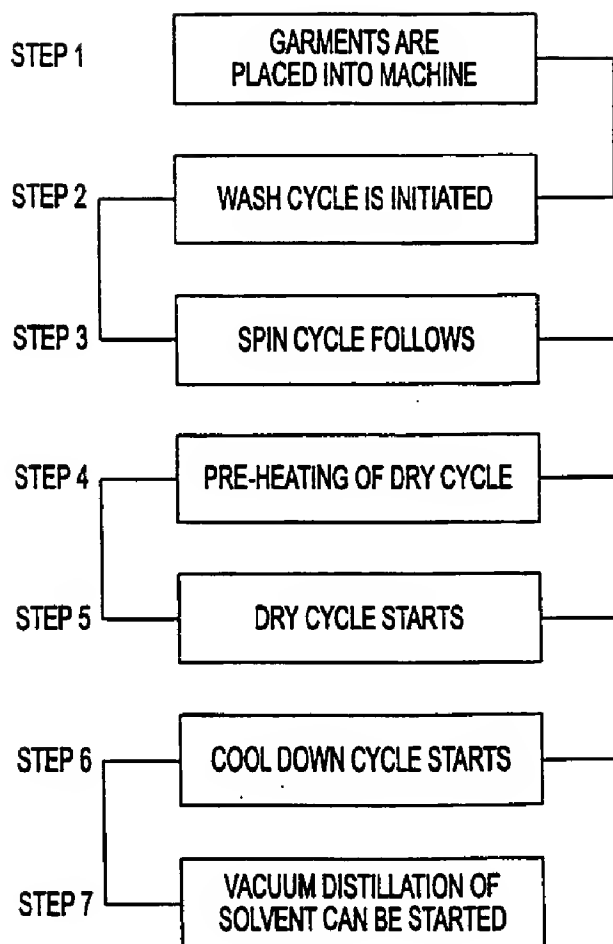


FIG. 1

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/US 99/15920

## A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 D06L1/02

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 D06L D06F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	DE 37 39 711 A (KREUSSLER CHEM FAB) 8 June 1989 (1989-06-08)	1,3,4
Y	examples 1,2 ---	1-10
X	DATABASE WPI Section Ch, Week 198908 Derwent Publications Ltd., London, GB; Class F07, AN 1989-058497 XP002119073 & JP 01 011599 A (FUJISHARYO KK), 17 January 1989 (1989-01-17)	6
Y	abstract ---	1-10
A	US 4 685 930 A (KASPRZAK KENNETH A) 11 August 1987 (1987-08-11) cited in the application claims 1,6 ---	1,3-10
	--- -/--	



Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.



Patent family members are listed in annex.

### \* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

15 October 1999

Date of mailing of the international search report

28/10/1999

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2  
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk  
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl.  
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Saunders, T

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/US 99/15920

## C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 5 301 379 A (SCHAAL ULRICH) 12 April 1994 (1994-04-12) abstract -----	1,2,5,6

Form PCT/ISA/210 (continuation of second sheet) (July 1992)

page 2 of 2

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/US 99/15920

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
DE 3739711 A	08-06-1989	NONE	
JP 1011599 A	17-01-1989	JP 1673244 C	12-06-1992
		JP 3035959 B	29-05-1991
US 4685930 A	11-08-1987	AU 585906 B	29-06-1989
		AU 4981785 A	22-05-1986
		CA 1239326 A	19-07-1988
		EP 0182583 A	28-05-1986
		JP 1502875 C	28-06-1989
		JP 61119765 A	06-06-1986
		JP 63050463 B	07-10-1988
US 5301379 A	12-04-1994	DE 59201588 D	13-04-1995
		EP 0527699 A	17-02-1993
		ES 2071474 T	16-06-1995
		US 5357771 A	25-10-1994

Form PCT/ISA210 (patent family annex) (July 1992)

THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)